therefore, proposed that ONGC/OVL should submit a suitable proposal for acquiring the blocks in the Gulf of Mannar region in the western offshore of Sri Lanka. OVL has purchased seismic data from M/s TGS NOPEC for Gulf of Mannar to examine the feasibility of their participation in E&P activities in the area.

GAIL (India) Limited had also approached the Sri Lankan Government in October 2005 with the objective of securing a few E&P blocks through the negotiation route. Subsequently, a GAIL team visited Colombo on 26-27 October 2005 and held discussions with the Govt. of Sri Lanka. GAIL was advised to examine the seismic data and inform the Board of Investments of Sri Lanka about blocks of interest to it. Regarding award of E&P blocks on nomination basis, GAIL has reported that the Sri Lankan side has informed that a bilateral MoU/Protocol would be entered between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka for awarding 2 or 3 blocks to Indian parties.

Allotment of petrol pumps in Andhra Pradesh

825. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of petrol pumps allotted by public sector oil companies in Andhra Pradesh during the last two years;

(b) the number of cases in which No Objection Certificates for setting up of petrol pumps were sought from the district collectors in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) the details of criteria used for the setting up of petrol pumps;

(d) whether any complaints has been received about violations of these criteria in Andhra Pradesh during the last two years; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) During the last two years, i.e., 2004-05 and 2005-06, the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPC) and IBP Co. Ltd. (IBP) have alloted 865 retail outlet (RO)

dealerships (petrol pumps) in the State of Andhra Pradesh. In respect of 714 cases, 'No Objection Certificates' (NOCs), were sought by them for setting up ROs, from the District Collectors in the State.

(c) After the dismantling of Administered Pricing Mechanism in the petroleum sector w.e.f. 1.4.2002, the public sector OMCs have formulated their own policies for setting up of ROs in the country. The general criteria for setting up new ROs at different locations in the country, are based on expected Sales potential of a particular location and economic viability in various classes of market, such as Urban, Rural and Highways. The ROs are developed subject to obtaining NOCs from District Authorities, approval from the Department of Explosive, NOC from the Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways (in case of ROs along the National Highways) and local Municipal approvals, etc.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Promotion of tourism in West Bengal

826. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) what steps are being taken by Government to promote tourism in West Bengal particularly in North Bengal; and

(b) what steps are being taken to develop infrastructural facilities in existing and future tourist spots of West Bengal?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Development and promotion of tourism is undertaken primarily by the State Governments/UTs Administrations. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, extends financial assistance to the State Governments/UT Administrations for tourism related projects which are identified in consultation and interaction with them under schemes for Integrated Development of Tourist Circuits, Product/Infrastructure Development of Destinations and Assistance to Large Revenue Generating Projects. Project proposals that are complete in all respect are approved on the basis of *inter- se* priority and funds released subject to availability under respective head.